

Rebirth of A River: The Stanislaus Saga

Proposal for a One-hour Video

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I. INTRODUCTION

On July 28, 1990, Parrotts Ferry Bridge, across the Stanislaus Canyon, arose from dead. Buried beneath 200 feet of water for over ten years, this historic structure suddenly re-emerged due to California's current five-year drought. The bridge, site of environmental protest against the damming of the 9-million-year-old, majestic limestone Stanislaus River Canyon, now stands as an eerie reminder of federal water policy gone awry.

And it didn't have to happen.

This special riparian habitat, once teeming with pines, oaks, and grasslands, along with 187 species of mammals, birds and reptiles, did not have to be sacrificed so farmers could get cheap water to shamelessly waste. Ancient Indian village sites and burial grounds, as well as the historic remains of the California Gold Rush, would not have had to drown had agribusiness in California's Central Valley practiced water conservation. And the greatest white-water rapids west of the Mississippi, providing the best access for the handicapped, would not have had to be painfully strangled had the public better understood the politics of water development in America.

But happen it did.

"Parrotts Ferry is the Limit!" screamed the letters slashed across this historic bridge over ten years ago, long the environmentalist's compromise filling level for the Stanislaus Canyon. A Parrotts Ferry limitation would have saved nine miles

of mystical river canyon while still impounding 2.4 million acre feet of water behind 60-story New Melones Dam built for power, irrigation and flood control. (An acre foot of water allows you to water one acre to the depth of one foot.)

"Parrotts Ferry is the Limit!" was a battle-cry that launched 1000 protests and counter-protests, myriad court cases, Congressional write-ins, phone-ins, rival vigils, initiatives, marches on the State Capitol, Congressional bills, advisory elections and an occasional bashed skull now and then. It was a cry responsible for one man chaining himself to a rock at the edge of the rising waters, forcing the Army Corps of Engineers to admit they were raising the level above State mandate. (They halted the filling for that year.)

It was also a cry that rallied 500 river supporters to the water's edge one warm June day in 1979, to form a human chain across the canyon and to dedicate an archaeological "timepiece" for future generations to find. It was a cry that channeled 500 "Friends of the Dam" toward the top of New Parrotts Ferry Bridge a few weeks later. There, they proceeded to pour buckets of water over the bridge, assisted by local fire trucks, in an effort to "fill-er-up" even faster. It was a cry that sent 16-year-old Susan Brooks into the canyon to rescue drowning animals, and sent Richard Anderson to dismantle the 150-year-old Pendola Ranch as the waters of New Melones Reservoir rose around him. And it was a cry that sent scores of people into the freezing water as "human water markers," while handicapped rafters in wheelchairs chained themselves to rocks to plead for National Monument status for this

national treasure.

Lastly, it was a cry that sounded the alarm for a federal water policy depleting our groundwater, destroying our agriculture, polluting our wildlife refuges, illegally costing the federal taxpayer millions of dollars in water subsidies, and delaying the implementation of the water-conserving technology that could solve the whole problem in the first place.

Suddenly, Parrotts Ferry Bridge had arisen like a river phoenix, to remind us all of the tragic environmental errors that had been made -- and to provide, perhaps, one last opportunity to correct them.

II. LITTLE KNOWN WATER FACTS

- Water that costs \$100 an acre foot to produce is sold to Central Valley agribusiness for \$3.50 an acre foot.
- A Rand Institute study concludes that agriculture wastes almost 50% of the water it receives.
- While it is agriculture that uses 85% of all State water, it is the poor urban dweller who is told he must conserve.
- Cheap subsidized water encourages farmers to over-produce, then the federal government gives them a second subsidy to take these newly-planted acres out of production.
- California is the only one of 17 arid Western states without a groundwater management plan.
- More than 2 million acre feet of water is extracted each year from California underground water basins than flows in.
- While there is only one undammed river left in California -- the Smith -- over 1700 miles of canals, ditches and pumping stations transport water from 1300 dams across the entire state.

- The California State Water System runs at a deficit of almost \$100,000 a day because of under-pricing of water and electric power.
- Los Angeles water consumers pay for almost 33% of all water shipped to Southern California, while utilizing only 3% of it. The rest is secretly diverted to growers in the south San Joaquin Valley.
- The technology to conserve water is already in existence -- if only agribusiness had the incentive to use it. As long as they receive cheap water, however, they will never change their farming practices.

What is important to remember is that there are answers to these inequities and illegalities of federal and state water policies. There are answers that can save our environment and our pocketbook, that allow America to keep both her wild rivers and her agricultural prosperity, that restore American pride by challenging her technological genius, that save her citizens enormous amounts of money while preserving her natural and cultural heritage.

In this manner, "Rebirth of a River" will not only frame the dimensions of this environmental tragedy, but also provide solutions to this national and state water crisis. It will show what actually happens when a river is dammed: the destruction of our environment, history, culture, agriculture, wildlife and the health of our economy -- all to the benefit of short-sighted politicians, dam-building companies and absentee, corporate farmers.

III. SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

"Rebirth of a River" will tell the whole story of the birth, life, and death and rebirth of the Stanislaus River Canyon. Never has the death of a canyon from drowning (nor its "natural rebirth" afterwards) ever been put on film before. (This unique footage could provide a strong selling point to libraries, schools and public television stations.)

The history of the Canyon will be told through FLASHBACKS, as one takes a contemporary journey down the Stanislaus, encountering the beauty of new vegetation and new rapids, while confronting the ghoulish beauty of a river rising from a watery grave. This history could include the creation of the Canyon, its Native-American and Gold Rush occupation, the historic water development in the Sierras, as well as contemporary environmental controversy. From a perspective of 10 years after, we could clearly see who was right and wrong. We could answer the questions of whether the water was really needed, and if the promises of the federal government to provide parks and cheap water to the local counties of origin were kept. (For the most part, they weren't.)

While exploring the history of the Stanislaus River, we shall also visit the heroes of the Stanislaus struggle, remembering what they have done and examining where they are now. In this regard, we shall interview MARK DUBOIS, who successfully chained himself to a rock to prevent the 1979 inundation and was honored recently as one of the founders of Earth Day 1990. We shall visit SALLY KENRICK, once a human water marker (see picture), now a healer of

people as well as rivers. We shall speak to RICHARD ANDERSON at his new Mother Lode Ranch, built from the historic remains of the Pendola Ranch. Finally, we shall ride with Susan Brooks, now a Grand Canyon river runner and former one-person campaign to "Save-the-Animals" in the drowning Stanislaus Canyon.

Crucial to the scope of the project will be an examination of the legacies of the Stanislaus Saga. First, by examining this story, we are presented with a unique opportunity to explore the myths of water, energy and agricultural policy in America. Examples of myths are: "Water projects are environmentally benign sources of power, they are built because we are running out of water, and they help the small family farm, the backbone of American agriculture." Nothing could be further from truth. At this moment of extreme drought, recession, and oil crisis, it is crucial that these myths be carefully examined.

Another crucial legacy of the Stanislaus Saga will be the exploration of the salvation of her sister river, the Tuolumne, in another epic, but this time, successful national battle to save a wild river. This is another amazing story, as yet unknown by most Americans.

A final legacy of the Stanislaus Saga to be studied will be the emergence of the "new environmentalist" -- a person as well versed in agricultural economics as wildlife, as knowledgeable in the reading of irrigation computers as the reading of whitewater rapids. In this manner, we would be provided an opportunity to present solutions to our water crisis, an approach that would help

answer America's pleas for more water education (see attached article).

IV. HOW THIS VIDEO CAN BE USED

The uses of this video, to be shot in the Super VHS format (see budget) are myriad. It can be utilized in the high schools and colleges as part of the resource education/environmental curriculum. It can be sold to libraries. It could be offered to public television, as part of such programming as the AMERICAN EXPERIENCE on KQED. It could be seen on public access channels around the country. It could be utilized by environmental groups to fight dams or water districts to help implement water conservation. It could be used to lobby for water reform on a national level or to help preserve what remains today of the Stanislaus River.

In closing, I should like to mention that a sense of urgency surrounds the project. It is crucial that a great deal of the videotaping be done now, while the Stanislaus River level continues to be down. With a fifth year of drought looming, with urban populations being forced to cut back as much as 40% (Santa Barbara), and even agriculture now being forced to cut back anywhere from 25% to 50%, the perspective and information this could provide could not be more timely.

This video could even help provide a foundation to change national water policy, stabilize and save what remains of the Stanislaus River, and assist in saving other rivers, including the now threatened Clavey River in Tuolumne County.

The irony of the Stanislaus Saga is that there are now no solutions to our water crisis in America that are economically, environmentally and politically feasible. They are solutions that allow all sides of this momentous water battle to come away with victory. These solutions include tax credits for conversion to water-saving irrigation technology, water "banking," water trading between cities and agriculture, the planting of less water-intensive crops, the use of gray water in the home, drought-tolerant plants, satellite weather information for computerized drip systems, crop infrared scanning for moisture levels, etc.

In essence, we shall show how to find all the water we shall need in the future at the "user" rather than the "supply" end of water production. It is crucial to get this information out now. Time for the Stanislaus River Canyon, like the whole planet, may again be running out. Solving the water crisis would go a long way to putting America into environmental balance and economic stability, as well as restoring some of our faith in our political institutions.

V. WHY ME?

In this brief summary, I hope to suggest why I am uniquely qualified to bring this project to fruition. First, I have had over 25 years experience in the film and video business, beginning with my obtaining a Master's Degrees in Cinema from the University of Southern California (1972). Upon graduation, I was offered a position at USC teaching the basic introductory film course to all incoming graduate and undergraduate students. (Two of my former

students were Bob Gale and Bob Zemeckis, producer and director of the Back to the Future film series.) While in Los Angeles, I produced and directed educational films, as well as writing feature-length screenplays. Thus, my experience has covered all facets of film and video production, including producing, directing, writing, editing and sound.

Tiring of life in Southern California, I moved to the Mother Lode region of Northern California in 1976. Here, I continued my career in media as: Assistant Professor of Television Production, Stanislaus State University; Video Instructor, Columbia College; and producer of the weekly broadcast of the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors meetings on public access television. From 1976-1990, I have also been employed as a video producer and media consultant for the following groups or agencies: U.S. Forest Service, San Joaquin County Office of Education, California Democratic Party, Sierra Conservation State Prison, County of Tuolumne, Modesto City Schools, Friends of the River, and the award-winning Senior/Youth Partnership of Tuolumne County. I also sit on the board of Directors of the Senior/Youth Partnership and Tuolumne County Community Cable Access.

Another reason why I am uniquely qualified to bring this project to fruition is that I was present at, as well as the primary documentarian of, many of the major events in the "Battle for the Stanislaus." Living close to the Stanislaus River in Tuolumne County, I was able to document unique historic events no one else knew about: the final archaeological dig in the famous gold rush town of Melones in the Stanislaus Canyon, the

dismantling of the Pendola Ranch as the waters rose around it, and the celebration of Parrotts Ferry Day. (Remember, it was at this event that 500 people formed a human chain around the Canyon, and others secretly buried an archaeological "time capsule" as a memorial message to the future.)

I have continued to collect every article, picture, report and transcript of public hearings, etc., relating to the Stanislaus issue from 1976 to 1991. The over 100,000 pieces of historic material I have collected shall prove invaluable for my research and video footage inserts for the project.

The main reason I have been willing to spend so much time documenting this issue is that I soon realized, upon moving to the Mother Lode, that water would be the next major environmental crisis confronting America. I have always believed that the struggle for the Stanislaus is a microcosm of the entire state and national water crisis.

My continued involvement in the public affairs of Tuolumne County, including my weekly televising of the Board of Supervisors, has enabled me to monitor and collect ongoing information relevant to the Stanislaus struggle. This issue has also made me aware of water conservation, and I have worked for water agencies creating water conservation videos. I produced a slide-tape, sync-pulsed presentation: "California Bloodlines," that Huey Johnson, former Secretary of Resources under Jerry Brown, called "the best media production produced on water policy in California." I continue to know and be in touch with the key players in the battles for the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers. I

attempt to attend all the major water conferences each year in California. I have produced numerous slide shows and previous videos on the Stanislaus (see enclosed video), including an enormous photo-journal that describes the events in the Battle for the Stanislaus and their implication for state and national water policy. I also wrote the archaeological section in the congressional study for Wild Scenic Status for the Stanislaus River.

It is for all these reasons that I feel uniquely qualified to produce the retrospective video on the Stanislaus struggle, a video that is both a memorial to the past and a blueprint for the future of the Stanislaus and water policy in general.

VI. THE BUDGET

The following is a budget for a 1-hour video, shot in the Super VHS format, a format that has superior resolution and reproduction quality, with over 400 lines of broadcast-quality video. The final edited master could be done in Super VHS, or transferred to a 3/4" or 1" master for broadcast on public television.

PREPRODUCTION (3 months):

Researching, collecting and collating materials, setting up interviews; writing the final script	\$3000
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	TOTAL: \$3000
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PRODUCTION (3 months):

Field Production Package: includes Panasonic-450 S-VHS camera, Nady high-band VHF microphone, Bogen fluid tripod (\$250/day for TEN DAYS)	\$2500
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Cameraperson (\$250/day for TEN DAYS)	\$2500
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Lowel light package (FIVE DAYS at \$100/day)	\$500
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Tapes: (20 super-VHS tapes at \$15/each)	\$300
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Cables, extra batteries, miscellaneous supplies	\$300
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Travel: (1,000 miles at 25¢ per mile)	\$250
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	TOTAL: \$6350
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POST-PRODUCTION (1 month):

OFF-LINE:

Time Code (\$25/hour for 20 hours of tape)	\$500
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Studio Rental to edit rough cut (80 hours at \$25/hr.)	\$2000
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Editor (80 hours at \$25/hr)	\$2000
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Narrator	\$500
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Music rights from music library	\$400
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Titles and graphics produced by an Amiga computer (20 titles and graphics at \$50/each)	\$1000
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Additional payment to other photographers for rights to their work	\$750
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	\$7150
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Total of all phases of production\$16,500
Five percent contingency \$825

GRAND TOTAL: \$17,325

Writings of Martin Blake

1. Stanislaus Congressional Wild and Scenic River Study:
"Archeaology and History" sections, December, 1979.
2. A Critical Study of the Implications of "Reality" in the Documentary Film, Master's Thesis, University of Southern California, Film and Television Department, 1972.
3. Produced media campaign strategy for the California Water Reform Initiative, on the 1982 California ballot.
4. Wrote script for: A County With Something for Everyone, 20 min. slide/tape presentation produced for Tuolumne County, California. (1985)
5. Wrote script for: Pathways to a Career, 20 min. videotape presentation for Modesto City Schools Vocational Education Program (1986)
6. The Last Man Home, screenplay written with Richard Anderson for feature production (1973).
7. Halls of Mercy, feature-length screenplay optioned for production by Tamimi and Associates, Westwood, CA (1977).
8. California Bloodlines, script for 30-min. sync-pulsed, slide/tape dissolve unit presentation, called by former California State Secretary of Resources Huey Johnson "...the best media production ever on water policy in the State of California." (1982)
9. Wrote script outline for San Joaquin County employee presentation, A Global Community. (1985)
10. Wrote outline for documentary film for public television: Hey, Buddy, Can You Spare A Drink? (1982)
11. Wrote screenplay, The Pinkertons: We Never Sleep. (1985)
12. Wrote: A River to Cheer, A River to Weep: The Stanislaus Saga, proposal for a series of six books detailing the struggle for the Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers. (1984)
13. Compiled the Stanislaus Notebooks, history of the events of the Stanislaus River Struggle. Copy requested for viewing by the Bancroft Library for possible permanent consideration in their historical division. (1981)

14. Wrote scripts for three presentations for the San Joaquin County Office of Education: The Connecting Link, To Find Myself and Outdoor Science Camp Overview. (1983)
15. Wrote script for Sonora Union High School District Regional Occupational Program: Job Rock. (1983)
16. Wrote three scripts for media presentation for Senior/Youth Partnership of Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador and Mariposa Counties. (1982-85)
17. Wrote script for: Fireman's Muster, Columbia, CA. (1980). Slide/tape presentation on permanent display with the Columbia State Historic Park.
18. Wrote: Water Scams, Dams, Waste and Welfare: a detailed outline (including 2 completed chapters) that explores state and national water policy. (1988)